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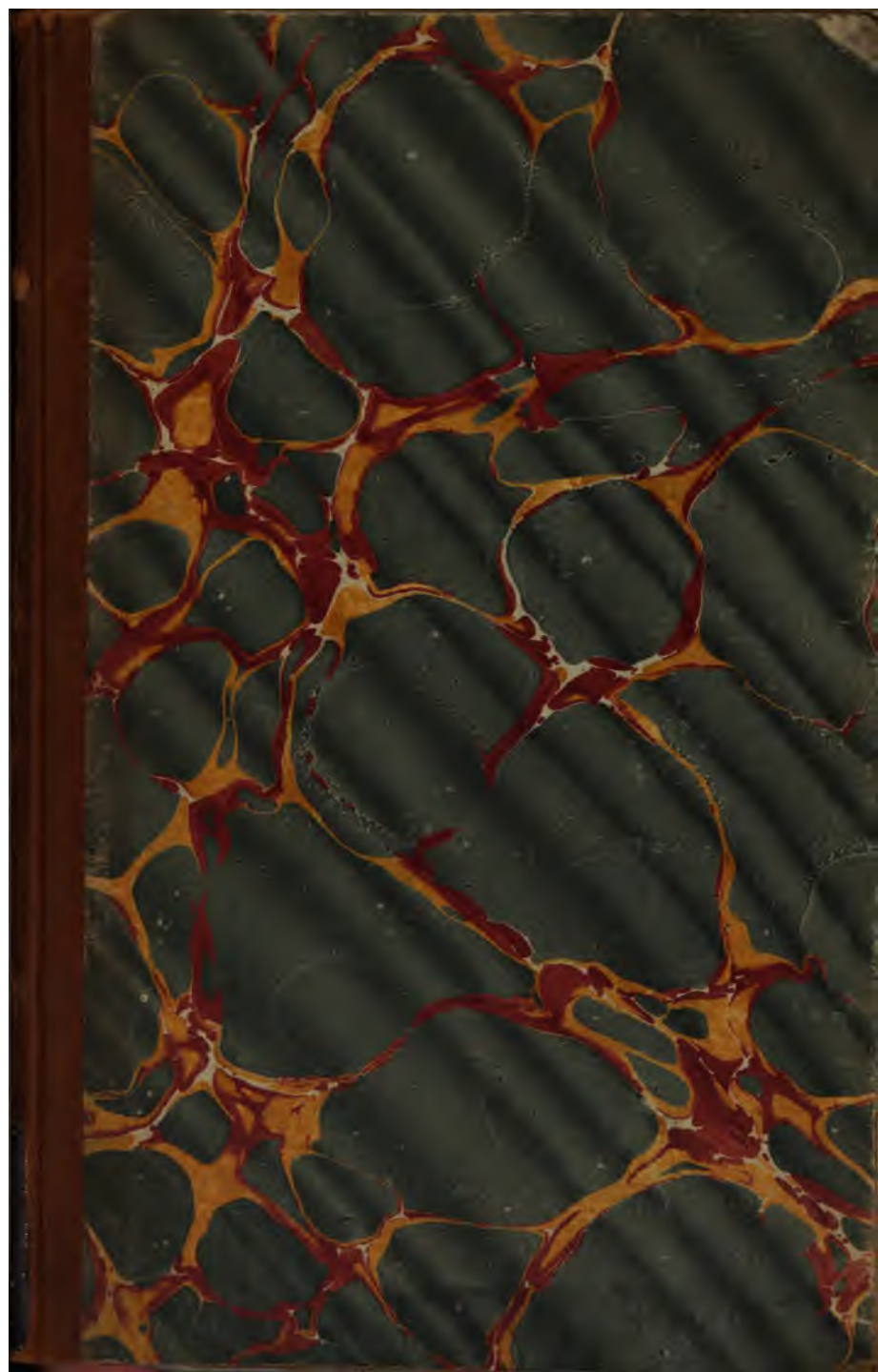
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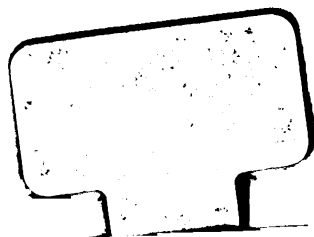
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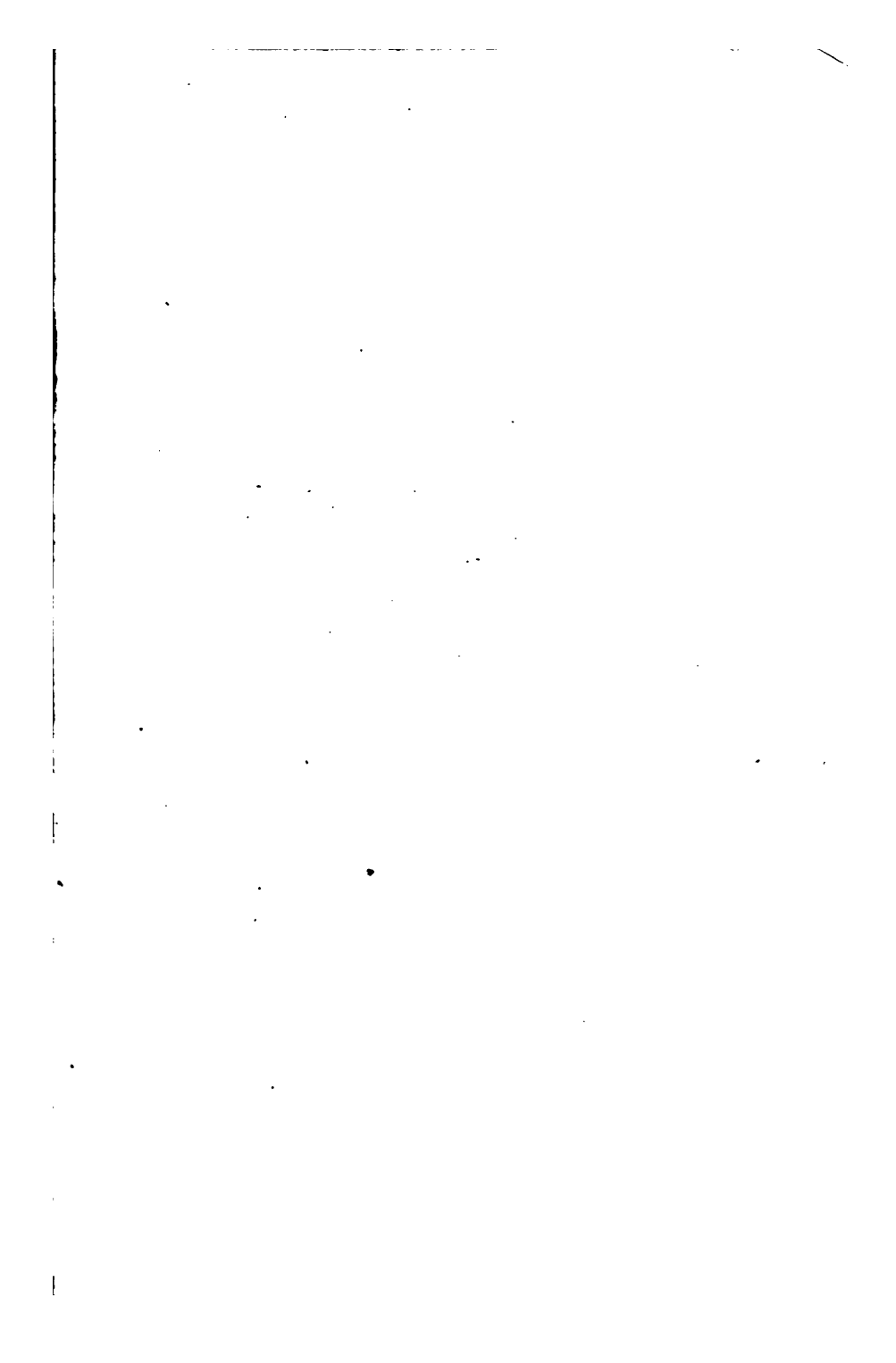
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1. 6. 119.







The Benefits and Obligations of the Divine Love in the Redemption of Mankind :

IN TWO
SERMONS

Preach'd in the PARISH-CHURCH of
WROTHAM in KENT;

ON
The 15th. and 17th. of April.

BEING
Good-Friday and Easter-Day.

By THO. CURTEIS,
Vicar of the said PARISH.

*Fide perditā, spe relicta, Intelligentiā obsecata, Voluntate captivā,
Homo quā in se reparatur, non invenit. S. Cypr. de Voc. Gen. c. 3.
Deus ergo sepulcos
Suscitat; & solvit peccati compede vincitor. Prosp. de Ingrat. c. 15.*

L O N D O N:
Printed for M. Lawrence, at the Angel in the
Poultry. 1715.


Price Six Pence.





To the Right HONOURABLE
THE
Countess of DORSET and MIDDLESEX,
Lady of the Bed-Chamber to
Her Royal Highness
THE
Princess of WALES.

MADAM,

 W A S observ'd to
Augustus Cæsar, by a
Person of Distincti-
on, " *That they who dar'd apply*
" *themselves to Him, were not*
" *duly appriz'd of their Di-*
" *stance : And they who dar'd*
" *not ; of His Humanity.*

As I would not be wanting
in a Deep Sense of the Former :

A 2

So

The DEDICATION.

So Nothing short of Your Eminent Goodness, and particular Taſt of this Sublime Subject, which contains the very Life of Religion, could have prompted me to any Thought of prefixing ſo Great a Name to ſo mean a Performance.

SHOULD I but attempt to pay a juſt Deference to Your Exemplary, tho' moſt unaffected Piety and invaluable Temper, it would be the only Offence for which I could deſpair of Your Pardon.

YET when We have the Happineſs to ſee ſuch Distinguishing Merit ſhine in Royal Palaces, and influence many Others to a becoming Emulation; the comfortable Preſage of Divine

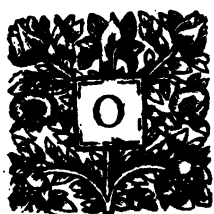
vine

ISA. LIII. Part of the 4th Verse.

*Surely He hath born our Griefs,
and carried our Sorrows --*

Or, according to the *Septuagint*, *

*He beareth our Sins, and is grieved, or
afflicted, for our Sakes.*



F all the inspir'd Writings before our *Saviour's* Incarnation, there are None which do so lively, so clearly, and frequently set forth the Time, Manner, and Circumstances thereof, together with its Blessed Design and happy Effects, as this *Prophecy*, of which these Words are a Part. The Sublime Author of it is therefore very often styl'd, by way of Eminence, the *Evangelical Prophet*: Either in respect of those bright Discoveries which were convey'd, thro' Him, to the *Jewish Church*, for their Consolation in the Expectance of the Promis'd *Messiah*; Or, of the Divine Mercy and Condescension in

* ΟΥΤΟΙΣ τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν φέρει, καὶ ὡς ἡμῶν ἐδυνάται --

in admitting the *Gentiles* to share in the inestimable Privileges of the Gospel. To this *Prophet* therefore we find our Blessed *Saviour*, and his *Apostles*, most frequently referring themselves, in the memorable Occurrences of their *Mission*, and the various Success of it.

IN one Place he tells us * *A Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his Name Immanuel.* At another; † *Unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given: The Government shall be upon his Shoulder; and his Name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.* And elsewhere he bestows whole Chapters in describing the Happy, Peaceable, and Flourishing State of *Christ's Kingdom* in the joyful Times of the *Gospel-Dispensation*. But in the Beginning of this Chapter he very pathetically complains of the Blindness and Incredulity of the *Jews*, in taking Offence at the Mean and Despicable Appearance of our *Saviour*; when he quitted the Heavenly Mansions of Glory, and took upon him the Human Nature, in the most low and Servile Condition of it, to accomplish the happy Work of Redemption. They had confidently expected a *Messiah*, set off with Honourable Titles, and visible Marks of Regal Power; to have retriev'd the sinking Grandeur of their *Church and State*: But that Poverty, Disgrace, Sufferings, and Mortality should make up any Part of his Character, they could by no means bear: Therefore,

* Ch. vii. 14. † Ch. ix. 6.

Therefore, as it is here foretold, *He was despis'd and rejected by them, as a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief: They hid their Faces from Him, and esteem'd Him not.* The next Verse acquaints us with the gracious End of his Incarnation; and that unsearchable Love which engag'd Him in it. *Surely, He hath born our Griefs, and carried our Sorrows; yet we did esteem Him smitten of God, and afflicted; i. e., He sustain'd the heavy Burthen of our Sins, and that divine Wrath which they drew upon Him; whilst the World condemn'd Him as a Malefactor, or one justly punish'd by the vindictive Hand of God.* Then, the holy Prophet proceeds to illustrate his wonderful, but voluntary *Passion*, and the blessed Effects of it; both as an expiatory Sacrifice, to free us from the Guilt of Sin, and bear the condign Punishment; and a Propitiatory, to reconcile us, by his prevailing Intercession, to the forfeited Bosom of divine Love, *He was wounded for our Transgressions; He was bruised for our Iniquities: The Chastisement of our Peace was upon Him, and with his Stripes we are healed.* And in the two last Verses, we have the glorious Success of this happy and wonderful Undertaking, *He shall see the Travel of his Soul, and be satisfied: By his Knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many: For he shall bear their Iniquities. — He hath poured out his Soul unto Death, and was numbred with the Transgressors; and bare the Sins of many; and made Intercession for the Transgressors,*

I HAVE been the more large in reciting so many Passages of this excellent *Prophecy*, because there is no Part of the sacred Records, before the Appearance of Him, who was as well the real Sacrifice for Sin, as *the Resurrection and the Life*, which affords so much Light into this astonishing, but most comfortable Mystery of Divine Wisdom and Love in our Redemption. And tho' we cannot arrive to a perfect Knowledge of it in this State of Mortality and Imperfection; tho' the blessed Spirits above, which encompass the heavenly Throne, *desire to look more fully into it*; and we must be content to know that it surpasses our present Knowledge and Comprehension; yet 'tis our Duty and Happiness, and ought to be esteem'd the very Life and Food of our Souls, to be acquainted therewith in such Measure and Degree as we are capable of. And in this so delightful, as well as profitable Contemplation, I shall endeavour to assist both you and my self, by considering,

- I. THE *miserable State of complicated Evils from which we are freed.*
- II. THE *wonderful Means whereby our Redemption was accomplished.*
- III. THE *blest Effects of it: Or the transcendent Dignity and Happiness to which we are advanc'd.*
- IV. THE *necessary Returns: Or proper Influence which it ought to have on our Lives.*

ON GOOD-FRIDAY. II

Of the Two Former only, I shall discourse at this Time. And,

I. If we look back on the Misery and Horror of our fallen State, 'twill exceedingly heighten that astonishing Mercy and Love which has effectually purchased our Deliverance. For,

1. *WE were by Nature Enemies to God.*

WE had not only extinguish'd every Spark of the Divine Life; depriv'd our selves of all Moral Goodness; and subjected both the discerning and executive Powers of our Souls to the strong Impulse of sensual Pleasures; but were in Love with the vile and unhappy Servitude. There was a fixt Contrariety in our Nature to the glorious Attributes and revealed Will of God: A strong Aversion in our Minds, Affections, and the whole Course of our Lives, Sin had utterly spoiled the original Beauty and Order of the Soul, as well as the perfect Temperament of the Body: So that both were sunk into a *Chaos* of the vilest Deformity and Confusion. And what concurr'd yet further to make the Misery of fallen Man the more compleat, was, an inveterate Obstinacy, join'd with his fatal Pride and Impotence, which set him at the greatest Distance from all relenting Passions that might tend to Supplication or Repentance. Tho' more despicable and helpless than a Worm, he presum'd to encounter with offended Omnipotence; and persisted in Opposition to his merciful Creator, trampling on

his Laws, and despising his Sovereignty: Yet even then, *the Lord of Hosts*, by inexpressible Condescension, became *the God of Peace and Love*. Thus the dreadful Breach began on our Part; but the Reconciliation on God's. Misery was the only powerful Motive that could excite the Divine Compassion. His melting Bowels happily prevented, not only our Deserts, but even all possible Desires and Hopes. For indeed the glorious Plan of our Redemption was laid from Eternity. Divine Prescience foresaw our shameful Apostacy; and provided a suitable Remedy before we had a Being, or the Foundations of the World were laid: And afterwards, when by voluntary Deviation we were become Rebels against God, and at Enmity with *the Prince of Life*, in his Love he pitied us and gave himself for us.

2. *WE were Vassals to Sin and Satan.*

MAN, since the Fall, is a Slave to the unbounded Insults of his disorderly Passions, and the Tyranny of the sensitive Appetite. He is, as Scripture expresses it, *sold under Sin*; or, as 'tis said of *Ahab*, *sells himself to work Wickedness*; till he becomes in the most abject Sense *the Servant of Corruption*, by a voluntary Choice and Submission to it. Thus *the wicked One*, who is styled *the God of this World*, gains a more absolute Dominion over him than any temporal Prince ever did over his Subjects; till he has wholly blinded the Understanding by Ignorance and Error, enslav'd the Will by an endless Train
of

of the most dangerous and unbridled Lusts, and defil'd the Memory by enchanting Images of sinful Pleasures ; so that the Condition of the most miserable Captive upon Earth is preferable to, and far less servile than that of an habitual Sinner. For the most cruel and tyrannical Usage from Men can reach only the Body ; the Soul retains its Freedom, even in the Midst of Chains and Tortures : But the Power of Sin principally affects the Soul, the most noble Part, and defaces the bright Character of the Deity, which was originally instamped upon it. In a Word ; the most insupportable Slavery that can be either felt or imagin'd, terminates with this present Life. With this holy *Job* comforted himself under the heavy Weight of his Afflictions: *In the Grave*, says he, *the Prisoners rest together, and hear not the Voice of the Oppressor* : But Death yields no Redress from the miserable Servitude of Sin : It passes over into the other World, and with the highest Aggravation pours out its dreadful Effects to Eternity.

3. *FALLEN Mankind lay under the avenging Sentence and Terrors of the divine Law.*

BEING convicted of Guilt, 'twas impossible for 'em to escape the severest Punishment threatned against Transgressors : Which admitted of no Alleviation from any Prospect of Pardon ; or the least Shadow of Hopes, from any propos'd Conditions of Repentance and Faith. No : These were Favours reserv'd for

a more glorious Dispensation ; wherein *Life and Immortality were happily brought to Light*. From that clear reflexive View of our selves, which we call Conscience, nothing could arise but a Sense of Guilt and Condemnation : And hence it is that impenitent Sinners are, as St. Paul says, *all their Life-time subject to Bondage* ; being continually obnoxious to Divine Wrath, which the Conscience, if not stupify'd, fearfully sets before them. 'Tis possible indeed for this just Accuser, which we can never wholly silence nor escape, by long Habits of Sin to be so far laid asleep, as to lose the Force of its uneasie Twinges, and give little or no Disturbance, tho' the Danger and Misery be unspeakably heighten'd thereby. Therefore the Apostle St. Paul describes the Wretchedness of such a State by those Metaphors which denote the greatest Stupidity and Impotence. One while he compares it to a *Stupor*, or deep Sleep ; from the spiritual Senses being bound up, and the Mind wholly disabled, by the Force of jarring Passions, to apprehend or judge of its own Misery : And elsewhere, to a State of Death ; which implies not only an entire Cessation of the animal Functions, but an absolute Inability to perform them.

4. EVERY Man living, as a Descendant from the first Adam, is subjected to Death, both Temporal and Eternal.

THIS is but a proper Consequent of that spiritual Death before describ'd. And indeed the

the whole Course of their Progress, thro' this sinful World, is so unsuitable to the Original Purity and Design of their Nature, that it scarce deserves to be honour'd with the Name of Life. 'Tis at best, but one continued Circle of Vanity; a Round of sinful Actions, dishonourable to their Creator, and disquieting to themselves: till, after a few Days, Months, or Years are squander'd away in the Drudgery and Defilements of Sin, with the many uneasie Incidents of such an unsettled State, they reach the fatal Period of this short, but invaluable Time of Probation, fall a Sacrifice to Death, and drop down into the bottomless Pit, the Center of all Pollution, Horror, and Misery. 'Tis there our blessed Saviour assures us, *the Wrath of God abides on them*: And who knows the Power or Extent of that Wrath, whilst the Divine Patience and Forbearance are length'd out? There, the heavy and unrelaxing Hand of infinite Justice will overtake all obstinate and impenitent Sinners; and terribly convince them of their unaccountable Madness in trifling away the present Opportunity, spurning at Omnipotent Goodness, and neglecting the Tenders of Salvation; by this further aggravating Thought, *That they might have been as happy as they are miserable*.

AND now how great and astonishing must that Love be, which pitied Mankind, in this low and helpless State, whilst sunk under the Pressure of all these complicated Evils! Which

16 A S E R M O N

reconciles us to God when our *Minds were alienated by wicked Works!* Which rescues us from the Tyranny of Sin, Satan, our sensitive Appetites, and disorder'd Passions; and restores us to the glorious Liberty of the Children of God! Which changes all the Threats of the Divine Law, and Terrors of Conscience into the sweetest Accents of Peace, Adoption, and Favour! And lastly, which disarms Death of its Sting or terrifying Force, and represents it to us as the welcome Passage to a blessed Immortality! How well may we therefore say, with this holy Prophet, *Surely he has born our Griefs, and carried our Sorrows!* Or join in Admiration with our blessed Saviour, *That God should so love the World, as to give his only begotten Son for their Ransome, and the Purchase of eternal Life to all that believe on Him!* Which brings me to the Consideration of the Second Thing proposed, *viz.*

II. *THE happy Means whereby our Redemption was accomplished.* And these were no less than *The Incarnation and Sufferings of the Son of God.*

IN the Incarnation, this ineffable Love was wonderfully display'd, in respect of

1. *THE real humane Nature,* which he took upon Him.

2. *THE most despicable and servile State of it.*

1. *THE real Humane Nature.*

As the Disproportion between the Deity and Man, or between Infinite and Finite, is far greater than between the most glorious

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Seraphim and the meanest Insect: So it argues the most inexpressible Condescension that *He*, who was, *without Robbery, or Usurpation, equal with God, the Brightness of his Glory, and the express Image of his Person*, should not only veil Himself with a Body of mortal Flesh, but stoop to a State of Infancy, wherein the Light and Perfection of the Reasonable Soul are for a Time imperceptible; and that he did not choose to assume the Nature of Angels, but the Seed of Abraham; that so a proper and full Satisfaction might be made to infinite Justice in the same Nature which had sinned; and, as the happy Consequence, *Mercy and Truth might meet together; Righteousness and Peace kiss each other*. Thus, in the Humane Nature He paid down the adequate Price for our Ransom; and by the Divine, imparts a just Value and Efficacy thereunto. *Being born of a Woman, made under the Law, and having satisfied the utmost Demands of it, he has redeemed us from that heavy Curse and insupportable Penalty. What astonishing Miracle of the most unparallel'd Love and Mercy is this! That the Glorious Author of our Being, should so far regard his Rebellious Creatures, as to send his only Son out of his own Bosom, to bring vile Sinners into it! That He should abase Himself to the most inexpressible Degree for our Exaltation; and make Him to become the Son of Man for our Sakes; that we thereby might become the Sons of God!* Therefore,

2. THE Lord of Life and Glory not only assu-

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med the real Humane Nature ; but submitted to the most Despicable and Servile State of it.

THO' He was eternally and invariably possess'd of the Divine Nature in all its Essential Glory ; or, as St. Paul expresses it, *the Fullness of the Godhead dwelt bodily in Him* ; so that he had an absolute Right to Divine Honour at his first Appearance in the World : Yet he took upon him the Form of a Servant, and became of no Reputation : or, as 'tis in the Original, * *emptied himself*, by a voluntary Submission to the Laws, Infirmities, and Wants of Humane Nature. What amazing Condescension and inconceivable Love must it needs be, for the Sovereign Ruler of all things, who upholds them in Being by the Word of his Power ; whom innumerable Hosts of glorious Angels adore in Heaven, and by whom the greatest Potentates sway their Scepters on Earth ; to quit all the Ensigns of Majesty, and be made not only lower than the Angels, but less than all Men ; nay, worse accommodated than either the Beasts or Fowls of the Air, whilst he reserv'd not so much as a Place where to lay his Head ! Or, as this Divine Prophet had foretold, *to grow up as a Root out of a dry Ground* ; without Form or Comeliness, or any thing to influence the perverted Fancy and Judgment of Mankind ! To choose the common Receptacle of Brutes for the Place, and them for the Companions of his Nativity ! To live

* *ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσας*, Phil. ii. 7.

live as obscure as was consistent with the great Work which he engag'd in ! To pass the whole Day in nothing but Acts of the highest Charity and Compassion to the Bodies and Souls of Men : And the Night frequently in Prayer and Communion with God ! To recommend Humility, the most necessary Habit for curing the Pride of our Nature, by stooping to the meanest Office of *washing his Disciples Feet* ! To bear, with incomparable Patience, the vilest Contradictions of Sinners ; whilst they endeavour'd, by the most malicious Calumnies, and against the apparent Convictions of Conscience, to obscure the Lustre of his Miracles, and brand his most innocent Actions ! And, in a Word, to make the whole Course of his Life one continued Passion ; as introductory to that ignominious Death which he had always in view ! Yet all these astonishing Degrees of Abasement were necessary to the blessed Work of Redemption : which was founded in Love and Pity, and accomplish'd by Sufferings.

AND this brings me to the Other, most sensible and evident, Proof of the infinite Love of God to Mankind, as the Means of our Redemption, *viz.*

2. *THE Sufferings of our blessed Saviour.*

THO' every Part of his Laborious Passage thro' this World, from the Manger to the Cross, was attended with nothing else ; from the unwearied Efforts of Satan, whose usurp'd Power he came to destroy : Tho' He was emphatically

styl'd a *Man of Sorrows*, and so truly acquainted with Grief, that none could be compar'd with His, either for Quality or Degree: Yet all that he had undergone, in the preceding Part, bare no Proportion to those Sufferings which crown'd the last and Finishing Stage of his Life. These were so deeply affecting, that 'tis said, at the Approach of 'em, *He began to be sorrowful*; as if he had been a Stranger before to that irksome Passion; or what he had already sustain'd were comparatively Nothing. Here, a Deluge of Sorrow was pour'd in upon him at once: As if *all the Windows of Heaven had been open'd, and the Fountains of the great Deep broken up*. For whatever could arise from a relentless Infliction of Divine Wrath, due to that Weight of Sin which he had undertaken to expiate; or, from the Malice of Satan, join'd with the Cruelty of Men, met together to make up the terrible Conflict: And, as that far exceeded the Comprehension of our finite Capacities; so nothing can be equal, or bear any just Comparison thereto, but that boundless Love from whence it proceeded.

BUT our Minds will be the more deeply affected with a becoming Sense of these unparallel'd Sufferings, and the Obligations arising therefrom; whilst we consider them,

I. As respecting *the Soul*. 2. *The Body*.

I. THE *Soul*.

UPON our most Gracious Saviour's Retirement, at his first coming to *Gethsemane*, before the Approach

proach of any visible Enemy, and whilst he was accompanied with his Three Favourite-Disciples only, who in the tenderest manner had promis'd their faithful Adherence to Him, his melting Soul was overwhelm'd with Sorrow, *even to Death*; and produc'd a miraculous Evidence of its Anguish on the Body, by a Sweat resembling *great Drops of Blood*. The Anxiety of his Spirit, from the Apprehensions of that *Bitter Cup*, was so great as to need the Assistance of an Angel. And tho' we can judge but imperfectly of those inward Wounds which he sustain'd; yet 'tis unquestionable that something infinitely heavier than the Pangs of Death, gave Rise to them: Otherwise, it must not be suppos'd that such Horror and Reluctance would in any Measure have appear'd in Him, who not only had perfect Patience, Resignation, and Faith, together with the Power of the Deity to support them; but knew infallibly that this sharp Trial would soon pass over, and the happy Issue would be his own Glorious Resurrection, with the Final Recovery of Lapsed Mankind. Tho' this was the great End of his Incarnation; and so deeply fix'd in his Mind, that with an endearing Anticipation he declar'd himself *straitned till 'twas accomplish'd*: Yet now, when the *Hour of Darkness* was come, and his Holy Soul ready to be *poured out as an Offering for Sin*, the deep Sense of its Vileness and Contrariety to the Divine Nature, with the Guilt and inseparable Punishment annex'd to it, intercepted all comforting,

forting Irradiations of the Deity, and let in an impetuous Torrent of the most piercing and unmix'd Sorrows. *The Father of Mercies*, to manifest his Glorious Attributes of Veracity and Unchangeableness, together with his utmost Abhorrence of Man's Rebellion and Guilt, would by no means relax the severe Sentence; but exacted full Satisfaction from the *Man of his Right Hand*, who had voluntarily engag'd as a Surety, and *was made strong* for that very Purpose. What Finite Capacity can therefore conceive the Degrees of such Sufferings; or the Weight of Divine Wrath, when avenging Justice inflicts the Punishment of Sin according to its Desert; since it wholly surpass'd the Power of the Humane or Angelical Nature to endure? If 'tis possible for Rational Beings to sink so far beneath themselves as to be in Love with this fatal Poyson of the Soul, which cost the Eternal Son of God so much for its Expiation; they will do well to consider further, if they are able to comprehend, what 'twas to have all the wonted comforting Emanations of Light and Joy suspended for a Time: To be depriv'd of the perfect Vision of God, and that Paradise of Divine Love which he had always within Himself. What Mortal Creature is able to sound the Depth of that bitter Complaint, *ELI, ELI, LAMASABACHTHANI*? Whole Nature groan'd, and shew'd its visible Sympathy at this hard and Finishing Work. The Fountain of Light withdrew its Beams, to represent that dreadful Eclipse

clipse of the *Sun of Righteousness*. The trembling Earth, from its deep Caverns, underwent a terrible Convulsive Shock. The Typical Partition of the Holy Temple was broken down. Many of the *Prisoners of Hope* escap'd from the Bands of Death, and took their early Flight into the Regions of Blessedness, as joyful Harbingers of His Glorious Resurrection. And if all this is not sufficient to crush the Pride of sinful Worms, and to melt them into the softest Accents of Gratitude and Praise, they must be infinitely harder, and more impenetrable than those Rocks which rent at his Expiration. Yet during this inconceivable Extremity of Grief and Torment, his Holy Affections, which the wonderful Occasion had rais'd to such an Height of Vehemency, retain'd their peculiar Innocence and Regularity. Whilst the ravishing Joy which the Deity had convey'd thro' the whole Course of his Life was eminently withdrawn; his Humility, Patience, Resignation, Faith, and Love remain'd un sullied, or rather in their Exaltation. For, had He so much as desir'd Deliverance from his Persecutors, 'twas in his Power to have frown'd them into Nothing. He, who rais'd himself at the prefix'd Time, from that dark State of Separation to which he had willingly submitted, and, with the Trophies of Victory and Triumph, led *Captivity Captive*, could in this disconsolate Hour have commanded *more than Twelve Legions of Angels* for his Rescue. But His heavenly Mind being intent on that hard but hap-

happy Work, he resign'd the whole Power of his Humane Will, notwithstanding the first seeming Reluctancy, to the Divine. *Not Mine, but thy Will be done*, was the repeated Language of his private Passion in the Garden: And afterwards, instead of the least Shadow of Resentment towards his Enemies, we find the most compassionate Prayer on their behalf, *Father, forgive them*.

I come to consider, in the next Place, that Part of *His Sufferings* which principally affected *His Body*; or were immediately inflicted by the Hands of Wicked Men.

THESE also eminently concur to set forth the transcendent Greatness of our Blessed Redeemer's Love to Mankind. And without endeavouring a particular Enumeration, I shall, after the Example of St. Paul, briefly comprize them in his Death; as the End or Consummation of them. This implies the lowest Degree of his Humiliation; and includes all the Bodily Sufferings which he had sustain'd, as preparative to it. *Being found in Fashion as a Man*. (says that Great Apostle). *He humbled himself, and became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross*: i. e. to Death, accompanied with the highest Dishonour and Ignominy, as well as the most exquisite Torment; Both which Evils are esteem'd the most contrary and terrible to Humane Nature. Whatever could conduce to heighten either the Shame and Reproach, or the Intenseness of the Punishment, met together in this Kind of Death. For,

1. *A very Distinguishing Infamy attended it.*

By the Jewish Law, *Hanging on a Tree* was in a special Manner branded with a Curse. Therefore such Bodies were, by Divine Appointment, *to be taken down in the Evening*, that the Land might not be defiled. And, among the Romans, Crucifixion was never allow'd to be inflicted on any but the most despicable or infamous Offenders: Such as were thought, thro' the Baseness of their Condition, unworthy of Respect; or, thro' the Heinousness of their Crimes, not deserving Pity. To punish Others so, who had been either of any Repute, or intitled to Civil Immunities, was (as their Historians tell us) thought a Crime inexcusable, and almost inexpressible.

2. *THO' the Death was very slow and lingering; yet the Pain of it was the most intense and extreme.*

THAT violent Extension of the Hands and Feet, to bear up the Weight of the Body, must needs produce a Degree of Torture inexpressible: Especially when those Tendinous Parts, which are liable to the acutest Pains, were divided and torn asunder, by large Nails or Spikes of Iron forcibly driven thro' them. Wherefore the compassionate Soldiers usually endeavour'd, by breaking the Legs, to shorten the cruel Misery and lingering Death of such Criminals: Whose Bodies, that their Ignominy and Punishment might be the more compleat, were usually expos'd as a Prey to the Fowls of Heaven; and denied the common Privilege of Burial, tho' the last and general Respect paid to the Dead. This

Part of the cruel Tragedy was indeed remitted, together with the customary Breaking of the Legs, thro' a special Providence, and for the Accomplishment of some Prophetic Passages in Holy Writ: Yet, by no milder, or more Honourable Death than that of the Cross, did the Son of God offer up Himself a Sacrifice for our Sins. His Gracious Hands, which had never been stretch'd out but in Acts of Charity and Compassion to Mankind, were cruelly wounded: Those precious Feet, which had taken so much Pains in walking, both on the Land and Sea, to do Good, were now violently pierc'd through: And His Body, which was the spotless Fabrick of the Holy Ghost, and the living Temple of the Deity, fell a Sacrifice to Death and the Grave! A most visible, but astonishing Instance of his superlative Love to Mankind!

I might now have proceeded to consider more particularly this Glorious and inestimable Love, as the special Gift and Designation of God the Father; in that *He spared not his own Son, but freely gave Him up* for our Redemption and Reconciliation: Which Harmonious Act of Mercy and Justice surpass'd the Wisdom and Foresight of all the Angels in Heaven. With good Reason therefore might the Apostle St. John represent God the Father to Us, as pure Essential Love; and enforce it with this powerful Argument, *because He hath sent his only begotten Son into the World, that We might live thro' Him*: Which is indeed an higher Demonstration thereof,

of, than his conferring on Us the Ultimate Reward of Glory and Blessedness. We find it express'd in the Holy Writings, by a Figure suited to our weak Capacities, that the Almighty *repented He had made Man*: But the Glorious Work of Redemption was so very Dear to Him; That when no lower Price than the Blood Royal of Heaven was sufficient to purchase it, He both express'd a singular Delight in pouring out that * Sacred Treasure; and accepted it as the most grateful Offering; or a *Sacrifice of a sweet smelling Savour*. †

I might also have enlarg'd distinctly on the unfathomable Depth of this stupendous Love, as it was manifested in the Person of *Christ the Redeemer*. That when all the Burnt-Offerings and costly Sacrifices, under the Law, were too worthless and insufficient to cleanse our miserable Souls from the Guilt and Defilements of Sin, He should so readily undertake that most important and glorious, but Difficult Task, with an affectionate Ardour and Zeal, suitable to the Greatness of it. * *Lo, I come to do thy Will, O God*, was the endearing Voice of Holy Prophecy on his Behalf. When the trembling Sinner was ready to go down into the Pit, this Divine Messenger and Heavenly Interpreter (as * *Elihu* very lively describes it) interpos'd as a Seasonable Ransom, to shew unto Man his Righteousness; to bring back his Soul from Destruction, and enlighten

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* Isa. liii. 10. † Eph. v. 2. * Psal. xl. 9, 10. * Job xliii. 21-20.

Him with the Light of the Living ; to pray unto God on his behalf, and obtain Favour for him, that he may see His Face with Joy. Can any Instance of Love, comparable to this, be found within the whole Frame and Power of Nature? If it be possible for a Man really to lay down his Life for his Friend, which is the greatest Proof of mutual Endearment that can be suppos'd: Yet even that would be infinitely short of a just Comparison to the many heightening Circumstances of our Blessed Redeemer's Love: Which brought Him down from the Eternal Regions of Glory to rescue stubborn, rebellious Sinners, and miserable Captives, from the Chains of Sin and Death; and raise them up to an unchangeable State of Blessedness in the Life of Heaven.

I might further have taken Notice of the transcendent Benefits accruing to Us from this inestimable Privilege; with those grateful Returns of unfeigned Praise and Universal Obedience, which they loudly call for at our Hands. But the Time will only allow me to put you in Mind of that most suitable Testimony of His Dying Love, which He Himself manifested in the Institution of His *Last Supper, or Holy Sacrament*: Wherein We both shew a becoming Obedience to the Authority of his Command, and thankfully commemorate the invaluable Benefits of His Passion. Let us therefore duly consider, and humbly admire the gracious Design, and most tender Care of our compassionate Saviour, in making such Provision for our

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Comfort when Himself was overwhelm'd with Sorrow, at the Approach of that Bitter Cup which was prepared for Him : And be always mindful of the Examination which is necessary for our approaching that Spiritual Feast : With the fresh Obligations We lay upon our selves to persevere in this Sacred Ordinance, and all other Duties of Religion, to the End of our Lives : Or, till He shall come again in Glory, to take Us up to Himself in His Heavenly Kingdom ; where Faith and Hope, with the present necessary Means of their Support, shall be swallow'd up in the Eternal Enjoyment of the Divine Presence, *which filleth all in all.*





ISA. LIII. Part of the 4th Verse.

*Surely He hath born our Grievs,
and carried our Sorrows ---*



THE Words, as you have lately heard, are a very strong and lively Representation of the infinite Love of God to Mankind, in the Incarnation and Sufferings of our Blessed Saviour,

THAT We may be duly affected with, and make the proper Returns for this Glorious and most comfortable Mystery of our Redemption, I propos'd to consider,

I. THE miserable State of complicated Evils
from which we are freed.

II.

A S E R M O N, &c. 31

II. *THE Wonderful Means whereby our Redemption was accomplish'd.*

III. *THE Blessed Effects : Or Transcendent Dignity to which We are advanc'd.*

IV. *THE necessary Returns : Or suitable Influence which is ought to have on our Lives.*

THE Two Former I went thro' the last Opportunity : And shall now, by GOD's Assistance, proceed to Discourse on the Last, with all possible Plainness and Brevity.

THEREFORE, in the Third Place, I shall consider the Happy Consequents of our Blessed SAVIOUR's Incarnation and Sufferings, as consisting chiefly in,

1. *HIS Resurrection, and Exalting the Human Nature to the Glory of Heaven.*

2. *HIS Intercession ; or applying the Benefits of His Death and Sacrifice to Us.*

3. *OUR Reconciliation and Adaption thro' Him,*

4. *THE Gracious Assistance of the Holy Spirit, for our Consolation and Support in all the Duties of Religion,*

1. *HIS Resurrection, or the Exaltation of His Human Nature.*

THO' Some of the most Grave and Deep-thinking Philosophers had plausible Notions of, and have left very curious Hints relating to the Immortality of the Soul, the Beauty and Order of Providence, and a Future State of Rewards and Punishments : Yet the Resurrection of the Body, being altogether above the Speculations of
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32 A S E R M O N

Philosophy, they could not form the least *Ideas* of it. * *Pliny*, in particular, endeavour'd to explode it as an unaccountable Opinion: And Sacred History informs us, That at † *Athens*, the most Famous Seminary of Learning and Speculative Knowledge, 'twas the most ridicul'd. For this Great and Fundamental Article of our Faith, which makes up the compleat Happiness of the whole Human Nature, was, in the Unsearchable Wisdom of GOD, reserv'd for the Brighter Discoveries of the Holy Scriptures; and especially of that more Glorious Dispensation wherein *Life and Immortality* are in a singular manner *brought to Light*. 'Tis indeed; a Truth so clear and unquestionable, as well as universally receiv'd by all Christians, that 'tis founded on the strongest Evidence of Revelation, Reason and Sense. Holy *Job* had, long before, declar'd his Assurance of this weighty and most comfortable Point, ‡ *I know*, says he, *that my Redeemer liveth, and shall stand at the latter Day upon the Earth: and tho' Worms destroy this Body, yet in my Flesh shall I see God*. And the Divine *Psalmist*, personating our Saviour Himself, expresses the same Confidence of His Resurrection, as the Happy Pledge of Ours *, *Thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hell* [i. e. in the Grave, and under the Power of Death] *nor Suffer thy Holy One to see Corruption*. St. *Luke*, in his excellent History of the Apostolical Times, assures Us, that

* Lib. VII. cap. iv. † Acts xvii. 18, 32. ‡ Job xix. 25, 26. * Psal. xvi. 10.

that Jesus *shewed Himself alive after His Death to His Apostles by many infallible Proofs; being seen by them Forty Days, and speaking of the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. And 'twas very happy that those Proofs were so clear and infallible; since They themselves were too desponding, and thro' an excessive Caution against being impos'd upon, become severely scrupulous in the Belief of it; till they had all seen Him, and were thoroughly convinc'd by the fullest Demonstration that Reason and Sense were capable of. His First Appearance was to *Mary Magdalen*. She hastens with Joy to bring the good News to His dejected Friends: but *they believ'd Her not* †. Then He appear'd to Two of His Disciples on their Way to *Emmaus*; who, after a very cautious, tho' full Conviction, imparted it to the rest; but without Success ‡. Afterwards He shew'd Himself to Eleven of the Apostles at once, and reprov'd *their Unbelief* *; One being providentially absent, to make way for a further unquestionable Proof; sufficient, we might think, to cure the Scepticism of Aftertimes. And lastly, to gain and strengthen His Belief, who had doubted more peremptorily than all the rest, He not only shew'd the very Wound which the *Soldier's Spear* had made in His Side, and the *Print of the Nails* in His Hands and Feet; but, by demanding actual Feeling, made another of His Senses the Evidence

* Acts i. 3. † Mar. xvi. 11. ‡ Ver. 13. * Ver. 14.

dence of his Faith. Then indeed the Conviction was compleat: And He cries out, *My Lord, and my God.* 'Tis therefore most plain and undeniable, That the Blessed *Apostles* could not be deceived in this important Truth; having taken all possible Care to avoid it. They saw Him with their Eyes; heard His Voice; felt Him with their Hands; did eat, drink, and converse with Him for a considerable Time; and at last, in the Face of the Sun, with Wonder and Joy, saw Him deliberately ascend towards Heaven. And they must certainly offer Violence to Human Reason and Understanding, who can suppose that Men of so great Plainness, Humility, and Love to Mankind, as the Apostles by their Writings shew themselves to have been, could impose a Falshood on the World, to draw vast Multitudes into inevitable Ruin; Or, that they would have forsaken their dearest Temporal Interests, and courted innumerable Affronts and Reproaches, with all the Fury and Outrage of Men, and at last violent ignominious Deaths, to support the Credit of their *Master*; if He had grossly frustrated His own Promise and their Expectations in a Matter of the highest Consequence. St. *Paul* afterwards, a Man of as great Learning and Sagacity as any Modern *Deist* can pretend to, and so far from prepossession in Favour of this New Doctrin, that with an uncommon Zeal He endeavour'd its Extirpation, by a miraculous Vision and Voice from Heaven became One of its strongest Advocates, against

gainst all the Threats and Punishments which both *Jewish* and *Gentile* Adversaries could either inflict or procure. His Testimony to this Point is very full. Having spoken of *Christ's Resurrection* and Appearance to the *Apostles*, He adds— * *after that, He was seen of above Five Hundred Brethren at once; of whom the greater Part remain at this present: And last of all He was seen of Me also, as of One born out of due Time.* And He proceeds to enforce the Certainty of our Resurrection by Vertue of our Blessed Saviour's, and the Firmness of his and other Christian's Belief of it, from all the Instances of Hardship and Self-Denial which they willingly expos'd themselves to in this World; and this He tells Us † elsewhere, the more antient *Martyrs* had also in View. Otherwise, says He, *If in this Life only, We have Hope in Christ, We are of all Men the most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the Dead, and become the First Fruits of them that slept.* As if He had said, By Rising again (of which We have the greatest assurance) He has abundantly manifested the Value and Efficacy of His Sufferings: He has rais'd up the Dead World to a Capacity of Eternal Life and Blessedness; has disarm'd and led captive the King of Terrors; and given His Church the most sure and irrefragable Proof of his Omnipotent Love, Care, and Faithfulness, to guide, preserve, and at last raise Her up to Himself. As the malicious Persecutors of

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* 1 Cor. xv. 4, 5, &c. † Heb xi. 35.

38 A S E R M O N

perfect Performance of the Conditions ; and consequently it must leave Us short of the Benefits thereby propos'd. But the peculiar Excellency of the Gospel-Dispensation is, That it considers Mankind as Fallen Creatures ; and contains the gracious Promises of Mercy and Pardon on the easier Terms of unfeign'd Repentance, sound Faith, and sincere, tho' imperfect Obedience : And not only so, but it imparts to them the Will and Ability to perform those very Duties which it requires. Hereby We are both assur'd of the Forgiveness of all those Sins which We unfeignedly forsake ; and have also a *Cleansing Fountain set open, to purge our Consciences from Dead Works*, and free Us from all our contracted Stains and Defilements. As the Best of Christians, whilst they are clog'd with Flesh and Mortality, have not only innumerable inherent Frailties to conflict with, but are expos'd to many Temptations from without, which too often betray them into sinful Extrems : So, to support their drooping Spirits, the Gracious Advocate is always ready to intercede for them in the Supreme Court of Heaven ; both for the Imperfections of their Best Performances, and for all such unavoidable Infirmitie's as are incident to their present Condition in this World. Hereby the Divine Anger becomes appeas'd, and as it were disarm'd ; and that compleat Pardon which was the Purchase of His perfect and meritorious Oblation on Earth, continually renew'd to every

very Pious, Humble and Penitent Soul. This comfortable Doctrin is with an affectionate Tenderness convey'd to Us by the Beloved Apostle St. John. *My little Children; these Things I write to You that ye sin not. And if any Man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. He is the Propitiation for our Sins.* Thus the ALMIGHTY condescends to draw Us to Himself by the strongest Bands of His Love; conquers our natural Impotence and Aversion; dissipates our guilty Fears; encreases our feeble Faith, and sets before Us the most powerful Motives to a chearful and universal Obedience. Having assur'd Us, That unfeign'd Endeavours to please Him in the whole Course of our Lives, by conflicting with our inordinate Passions and sinful Appetites; an unreserv'd and delightful Respect to all His Commands; and a sincere Regard to His Glory, as the ultimate End of all our Actions; are both accepted, and shall be rewarded, thro' the Merits of Him, *who by the Eternal Spirit offer'd Himself a spotless Sacrifice on our Behalf.* Which brings me to the Consideration of a Third further Benefit or Privilege arising from the Incarnation and Sufferings of CHRIST; *viz.*

3. OUR Reconciliation and Adoption through Him.

THIS is the peculiar Happiness of all Those, who by an obedient Conformity to the Precepts, are become Partakers of the Grace and Privileges of the Gospel. *Tho' by Nature they were*

were Children of Wrath, Enemies to GOD, and Strangers from the Covenants of Promise : Yet now, being reconcil'd by the Death of CHRIST, they are made nigh thro' his Blood, and adopted into the Family of Heaven. A becoming Sense of this inestimable Favour and Dignity made the Apostle St. John break out into a kind of Ecstasy of Admiration ; Behold, what manner of Love the Father hath bestow'd upon Us, that We should be call'd the Sons of God ! The utmost Ambition of the poor returning Prodigal in the Parable, was to be rank'd among the hired Servants ; which is indeed a Favour beyond the reasonable Expectations of Mankind, who have made so ill an Use of the Talents they were intrusted with : But 'tis the Glory of Our Blessed Redeemer, to honour his humble Votaries with the most amiable Title of Sons ; whilst they bear the Resemblance of Him, who, by voluntary assumption of the Human Nature, is not ashamed to call them Brethren. The whole Systeme of the Gospel represents God as a most merciful and compassionate Being ; who is always ready to accept of sincere Obedience from His Creatures : if with penitent Hearts and a deep Sense of his Love, they endeavour to forsake the Ways of Sin, and become truly conformable to His Revealed Will. Having brought again from the Dead the Great Shepherd of the Sheep, thro' the Blood of the everlasting Covenant ; He is become the God of Peace and Reconciliation. Yet the same Gospel, with equal clearness, excludes e-
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very individual Person who abuses such an invaluable Favour by a wilful continuance in Sin; from having *any Part or Lot in this important Matter*; and utterly denounces them to be *in the Gall of Bitterness and the Bond of Iniquity*. From whence it plainly appears, That Christianity is a real Governing Principle; and more than an empty Name or Title. That it rectifies the Understanding and Will, with all the overt Acts arising therefrom. That it reaches the most Secret Thoughts and inmost recesses of the Heart, which are impenetrable by all but Divine Omniscience. That it chafes away the lurking Seeds of Error and Vice, of Pride, Envy and Hatred; and diffuses thro' the Soul the comforting Beams of Love, Purity and Peace: till it forms, on Earth a lively Representation of that pure Society above; and at last happily translates Us thither. Hereby alone We are furnish'd with suitable Remedies against all the Evils of this present Life: and are assur'd that every Condition, whilst We are in the Way of our Duty, shall be not only safe: but beneficial to Us. That God Almighty disposes all Things, both with unerring Wisdom and the indulgent Care of a merciful Father: and that the Oeconomy of his Providence is truly Just, Wise and admirable, even in those Allotments which render it most suspected or censur'd by the highest Pretenders to Reason. Hence the whole Train of Temporal Afflictions incident to this mutable State of Things, will become subservient to our

Everlasting Good : and Death it self, which Human Nature esteems the most terrible, from the violent Dissolution of its Frame, will be rendered not only Familiar but Desirable. Especially if We consider in the last Place,

4. *THE Gracious Assistance of the Holy Spirit, for our Consolation and Support in all the Duties of Religion.*

THE Blessed Author of our Salvation has not only engag'd Us in a Spiritual Warfare ; and enjoy'd the seemingly difficult Task of Self-denial, or *taking up His Cross daily*, as the way to obtain the incorruptible Crown : but being thoroughly acquainted with the Temptations and Trials attending it, as a kind and compassionate Leader, has abundantly furnish'd Us with all the necessary Aids for confirming our Faith, encouraging our Obedience, and refreshing our Minds with the *Ideas* of that Future Glory which is the sure Purchase of His Incarnation and Sufferings. Our Warfare then being such, as will certainly be attended with Victory and Triumph, if We are not wanting to our Selves ; nothing can be more truly pleasant and delightful to every generous Mind than to gain such an Honourable Conquest : Which, tho' it requires an habitual Exercise of Prudence and Conduct, is infinitely preferable to the unhappy indolence of the most accomplish'd Libertine. The Service of God is therefore truly the most perfect Freedom ; as it raises the Mind to suitable Objects, and sets it at Liberty from
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the unruly insults of its own sinful Passions and inordinate Affections; which are the only Grounds of uneasiness and Disquiet. When these are repell'd by the Superior Force of Divine Love and the Aids of the Holy Spirit, the happy Consequence will be intellectual Joy and Complacency; such as is substantial and serious, being deeply fix'd in the Soul, and filling it with serene, regular and pious Thoughts, inflexible Vertue, and uniform Peace and Tranquillity. Thus the very Task, which our gracious Saviour enjoins, is *easy*, and *his Burden light*: *His Ways are Pleasantness*, and *all his Paths are Peace*. In keeping those Commands which He has declar'd to be the sure Test of our Love to Him, *there is great Reward* both present and future. And can We then be so disingenuous as to complain of Hardship whilst the very Work is Reward for it self: So that if He should never vouchsafe to give Us any hereafter, yet our frail and imperfect Service would be abundantly overpaid in that true Happiness of the Mind which is no other way to be enjoyed? But how admirable and endearing should that Divine Love and Goodness be esteem'd, which not only affords so ample a Reward at present, but assures Us of a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory, to crown our sincere Obedience in the End! Certainly then that Spiritual Delight which accrues to every Religious Soul from the Conquest of their own sinful Appetites, Slothfulness, or Worldly Temptations, is

beyond all comparison preferable to the forc'd and fleeting Pleasure which they could have reap'd by consenting thereto. Whilst they are thus *virtually risen with Christ*, and can evidence it by *Seeking the Things that are above*; how sweetly do they enjoy both God and themselves! How clear and unclouded; how amiable and uninterrupted is their Prospect into Heaven! They can humbly appeal to the Blessed Redeemer and Lover of Souls, like that eminent Apostle, *Thou knowest, Lord, that We love Thee*; and in all the Dispensations of Providence, discern a reconciled, most merciful and indulgent Father, taking Care for their Safety, accepting their poor and feeble Services, and preparing their Reward. By looking up to the glorious *Autor and Finis* of our Faith, we shall be enabled to *endure the Cross, and despise the Shame, Calumny and Reproach* which has always attended it, not only from the dissolute Part of Mankind, but the most exalted Wisdom of this World: We shall pass the Time of our sojourning here in holy Fear, Resignation and humble Dependence; and laying aside every Clog or impediment, run with Patience, alacrity and circumspection the Race that is set before Us. Which brings me to the consideration of the Fourth and last Thing propos'd, viz.

IV. *THE Necessary Returns*: Or proper influence which these inestimable Benefits of Redemption ought to have on Us in the whole Course of our Lives.

THIS,

THIS, in general, is no less than A steady and delightful Endeavour to conform our Selves to the *Example and Precepts of Christ*: Or, as St. Paul to Titus expresses it, *To adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all Things.*

As His Example is the most perfect and Authoritative Pattern: So His Precepts are the most Reasonable, powerful and perfect Systeme of Holy Obedience. Therefore the Universal Rule of the Gospel, which includes all the particular Duties of it, is *to walk as Christ walked*: Whose Example, as bearing the compassionate Tenderness and Affections of the Human Nature, with the unchangeable Goodness and Omnipotence of the Divine, is happily suited to our present State. For, that more early Condescension and Command of God to *Abraham*, and the Heirs of his Faith and Promises [*I am the Almighty: walk before me, and be thou perfect*] afforded far less Consolation and Relief. Such is the weakness of our Nature, and the obscurity of our Minds, that the Pattern was too Bright and Glorious to be imitated by Fallen Creatures. But the strong and dazzling Perfections of the Divine Attributes are now become wonderfully sweetned by the Incarnation of the Son of God: who has been graciously pleas'd to descend to Us, when We had no Desire, ability or Strength to ascend towards Him; and to set before Us in our frail and imperfect State a more imitable Copy, and better suited to our present Capacities, to be carefully transcrib'd by Us in our Lives. In
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that memorable Abridgment of Christianity, His excellent Sermon on the Mount, He enforces, with the clearest Arguments imaginable, the Purity, Latitude and unalterable Obligations of the *Moral Law*: and having freed it from the darkning Gloses of Pharisaical Interpreters, shews its great Design in promoting Universal Benignity and Love. Hereby We are taught to govern the Sensitive Appetites and Affections; which otherwise will not only *war against*, but stain and vilify the Soul; and deprave its Taste to all Spiritual Delights. For as Innocency and Happiness were at first lost by sensual indulgence: So, till the Flesh is subdued to the Spirit, We can never recover them. Here We learn also that immutable Standard of Natural Justice, To make our Love to and Care for own Welfare, the Measure and Pattern of our Deportment towards Others. And above all, We are instructed in our Apprehensions of, and Approaches towards God: That we pay the special Honour due to Him, by the Veneration of our Minds, the Subjection of our Wills, and the Ascent of our Affections, in all the instituted Duties of Religion.

BUT more particularly, The principal *Vertues* which eminently shone in the Life of *Christ*, and manifest our Thankfulness for the great Benefits of His *Incarnation and Sufferings*, are
HUMILITY, Peaceableness, and Charity.

I. HUMILITY.

THIS is the genuine Offspring of the Gospel
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Dispensation; and the Brightest Ornament of Human Life. The greatest Zealots in the *Jewish* Church had little or no pretensions to this ennobling Vertue: and the *Gentile Philosophers*, who had said many fine Things in commendation of it, were no less Strangers to it in Practice. As Pride was that Fatal Poyson of the Soul which first excluded Man from Paradise: So it still remains the greatest of all Obstacles to his Return thither: And Humility is so Essential a Part of the Renovation of our Fallen Nature, that 'tis the Groundwork of Faith, Repentance and all other Sanctifying Graces of the Holy Spirit, by which We receive and apply the Saving Benefits of Redemption, and are restor'd to the Divine Favour and Acceptance. Indeed nothing so highly becomes Us, either as Dependant Creatures or as Returning *Prodigals*. For if We were by Nature *Children of Wrath*, and Heirs of Eternal Death; then every Step towards our miraculous Recovery, both in the Glorious Means of Reconciliation appointed, and all those Supernatural Aids which are necessary to purify and prepare Us for the Life of Heaven, proceeds entirely from undeserv'd Mercy, and calls for the deepest Humility and Thankfulness to the Supreme Author of it. Can there then be the least room for Vanity or Ostentation, whilst We consider that the Brightest of poor insatuated Mortals shine but with a borrow'd Lustre; and that all their imaginary Excellencies, whether natural or acquired, are intirely owing to the

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the Divine Goodness and Bounty? If we look at the Endowments of the Body or Mind: The Former are so transient that the inspir'd Wisdom in Holy Scripture always compares 'em to Things of the shortest Duration: And the Latter, if rightly improv'd, do but tend to *increase our Sorrow*; according to that just Observation of the Wisest of Men: Both by discovering the infinite Space of Things which We are yet ignorant of, and the insufficiency of all present Knowledge, either to supply our Defects or satisfy our Desires. Can We then think to merit any thing at His Hands who has given Us our Being, and all those Powers or Faculties by which we act either as Animal or Rational Creatures? Or can we imagine our Selves to be above his Disposal who has intrusted Us with those Talents under the restriction of most equitable Laws, design'd for our Happiness? Especially have We not the highest reason to be humbled, or, as St. Peter elegantly expresses it, *clothed with Humility*, when We consider our Selves as sinful and polluted Creatures; who have lost all the Original Purity and innocence of our Nature, and have rank'd our selves among the worst of Beings, in Rebellion against the most gracious Sovereign, and ingratitude to the highest Benefactor? Whilst then the exhaustless Treasures of Redeeming Love are so abundantly discover'd in the Blessed Gospel; let this most necessary and Beautifying Vertue have such an ascendant on our Souls, as not only to brighten

brighten our Faith and add Pervor to our Love, but enable Us to improve every State of Life to the highest Advantage: in Prosperity, to be thankful, cautious and Fruitful in Good Works; and in Adversity, to learn Patience, Resignation and Contempt of the World.

2. *PEACEABLENESS* is also a necessary Ornament to the Doctrine and Practice of Christianity.

THIS is One of those genuine Fruits of the Spirit, which St. Paul often recommends as a proper Return for the inestimable Benefits of Redemption, and no less Essential to the Christian Faith than to the Comfort and orderly Support of Civil Society. And St. James makes it one of the principal Characteristics of that true Wisdom which is from above; that 'tis first pure, than peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated; full of Mercy and good Works, without Partiality and without Hypocrisy. But, above all, our Blessed Saviour himself, in his excellent Discourse on the Beatitudes, distinguishes the Peacemakers with a particular Emphasis, that they shall be called the Children of God: as if this amiable Habit, above all Others, were the very Genius of that Holy Religion which He came to propagate; and most eminently restor'd Us to the Divine Image, as the highest Qualification for those Heavenly Regions of Peace and Love, from whence He descended for our sakes. This indeed was the happy Design of His Incarnation; to recover and establish Peace on Earth, with Goodwill both towards and amongst Men; and, as the Ultimate End, to bring Glory to God in the Highest. As

the *Mediator of Peace*, He has procur'd it between God and Man : and, as the *Minister of Peace*, He restores that invaluable Blessing to the World : But in both these endearing Capacities, He fills the Souls of all pious Christians *with Joy and Peace thro' Believing*. All the Precepts of his Holy Doctrin directly tend to extirpate the Seeds of Enmity and Discord in Mankind ; and *to guide our Feet into the Way of Peace* : That, as We are, through his Sacrifice and Intercession, united by Faith and Obedience to God ; We may also, thro' a deep impression of those inestimable Benefits on our Minds, be united by Love and Charity to each other. In order to which Heavenly Frame, We are not only forbid to do Injury to Others, or to revenge any Wrongs done to our Selves, but enjoyn'd to *do Good against Evil*, to requite Injuries with Kindness, to *love our Enemies*, and *Bless them that curse Us* : Which, tho' contrary to the Bent of deprav'd Nature, is the peculiar Law of our Blessed *Saviour*, and the Distinguishing Honour of the Gospel, as well as the supreme Beauty and Perfection of the Reasonable Soul. Neither does this most excellent Institution reach only the outward Acts of our Lives, which lie open and expos'd to Human View : But it looks inward with equal Care, and imposes a Law on our very Thoughts and Desires. It severely forbids Us to think or judg hardly of our Brother ; to despise Him in our Hearts, or entertain the least Shadow of causeless Anger against Him. Whosoever therefore does but cherish in his Mind any corroding Malice or secret Grudge against his Neighbors, or endeavour by artful Suggestions to wound their Credit, Interest or Reputation, is as really guilty of a Breach of the Fundamental Laws of Christianity, as if He was never so openly injurious. And if it be thus in respect of Private Persons : then much more in respect of *Governours*, both *Civil* and *Ecclesiastical*, which are the special Ordinance of God, for our Temporal and Eternal Happiness. To Despise, Defame and Disobey the

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One, (Or, as *S. Peter* calls it, *to speak Evil of Dignities*), is to reject the Authority, Wildom and Providence of God, the Omnipotent Creator and Governour of the World : And to vilify or oppose the *Other*, is, to condemn the gracious Promise, immutable Love and propitious Care of the Blessed Redeemer towards His Mystical Body, the Church, whom He hath purchas'd with His own Blood. 'Tis therefore undeniably evident, let Mens Pretences be what they will, *That Christianity is, the Way of Peace* ; and breaths nothing but Love, Obedience and Subjection to Superiors in Church and State ; from the strongest Motive of Conscience, and a just regard to that Delegated Power which They are invested with for the Good of Mankind :

3ly and Lastly, A further Branch of that consummate Obedience which eminently appear'd in the Life of Christ, as the most Authoritative Pattern for our Imitation, was,

UNIVERSAL Charity and Beneficence to Mankind.

THIS is also a great and Fundamental Part of the Christian Religion ; and a Vertue absolutely necessary, to manifest our Thankfulness for the inestimable Benefits of His Incarnation and Sufferings. As His whole Life was One continued Illustration of the most unspotted Innocence, perfect Patience, incomparable Meekness, and the most extensive Charity : So, a delightful imitation of Him in this Heavenly Vertue, is the surest Evidence of our Conformity to His Life, and interest in all the Benefits of His Death. For, in this, as well as all other His imitable Perfections, He left *Us an Example, that We should follow His Steps*. 'Twas a very full but compendious Character of the Blessed Author of our Salvation, *that He went about Doing Good* : And 'tis the Distinguishing Badg of Christianity, that, whereas all other empty appearances of Religion, indulge the Pride and partial Affections of corrupt Nature, this recommends and enjoins Universal Love among Men ; which (as *S. Paul* assures Us) amounts to a *Fulfilling*
of

52 A S E R M O N, &c.

of the Divine Law ; and is no less than an abridgment of all Christian Perfection ; since Love to God and Man is the Substance of every particular Precept. This being therefore the principal Habit wherein the Recovery of the Divine Image consists, and the happy Evidence of our *Dwelling in God and He in Us* ; 'twas with the highest Reason that S. Peter exhorts every individual Christian above all Things *to have fervent Charity among themselves* ; as being united in the most Sacred and indissoluble Bands, Members of the same Mystical Body, and Joynt Heirs of the same glorious Inheritance. Such Diffusive Charity has then a more Noble Principle than the narrow and limited Affections of Nature : Since it proceeds from *the Love of God shed abroad in their Hearts* ; to make them *of One Mind and of One Soul* : and especially from that great Example of our Saviour, who by His perfect Obedience and Propitiatory Sacrifice has reconcil'd them to God, that they should *love One another as He has loved them*. This great and indispensable Duty is most eminently shewn in its proper Returns, by our Frequent and Delightful Obedience to His Universal Command of bearing in Mind, thro' the visible Pledges of His appointment, a deep Sense of His infinite Love, Power and Goodness manifested to Us in His Death and Resurrection : Which so often as We solemnly commemorate, with a lively Faith and extensive Charity, We shew our Selves to be real Members of His Mystical Body, and of each other. In a Word : By the Exercise of this Divine Vertue, We make the nearest approaches to Heaven itself, whilst We are yet clothed with Mortality ; and become inur'd to that most happy delightful and eternal Employment of contemplating, admiring and praising our Glorious Benefactor. Hereby We enjoy the liveliest Pledges of Spiritual Communion with God the Father, Son and Sanctifying Spirit ; till We come at last to joyn in Consort with the Heavenly Choir, in ascribing Glory, Adoration and Praise to the *Holy, Blessed and Undivided Trinity*, World without End. Amen. FINIS.

